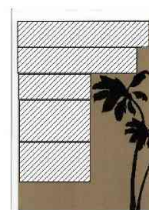


READERS'

AWARDS

2009

Thousands of nominations – and not one mention of that dreaded word ‘staycation’. You lot like your holidays and, back in July, you told us where you would (and most definitely *wouldn't*) like to stay, who you fly with, and which companies you trust to make your breaks special. And, thanks to our unique ‘open’ voting system, which allowed readers to nominate at will, and explain why they liked and disliked their choices, the Davids of the travel industry got to challenge the Goliaths. Flybe, for example, may have received fewer nominations as ‘Best Low-Cost Airline’ than other carriers, but the



impressive feedback you gave it saw the airline soar into second place – ahead of, say, Ryanair, which garnered more negative comments than positive ones.

The results make interesting reading, but we didn't want to give you just a list of winners and runners-up. Instead, each category comes with insider tips and info to help you plan your next trip. Thanks to all who took part, and congratulations to Clare Ozkan from West Sussex – whose feedback won her a £7,000 trip to the Maldives (we're sure she'll let us know what it's like!).

## FAVOURITE WORLDWIDE COUNTRY FOR A LONGER HOLIDAY

1. USA
2. THAILAND
3. AUSTRALIA

Perhaps it's the Obama effect. A year ago, voters were divided about America: dynamic and diverse, said some; just plain dumb, insisted others. This time the US is a streets-ahead winner, loved for the vastness of its open spaces and the friendly optimism of its folks. 'Even the lesser states have their own micro-culture to explore,' one reader says. Thailand sneaks into second place thanks to its beach culture and Bangkok nightlife. ('Your money goes further, too.') Australia, meanwhile, received plaudits for its 'fantastic mix of city life and bewildering, beguiling wilderness'.

### The US guidebook writer says...

Greg Ward, USA expert for Rough Guides, picks his ultimate destinations in your favourite country

- The beach: 'Ke'e beach, on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. It's a gorgeous strip of tropical sand with its own coral reef and jagged green mountains rising behind.'

- The wilderness: 'Zion National Park in Utah is strangely underrated – red-rock cliffs deep in the desert, slashed by the Virgin River. It's easy to team with Vegas for a twin-destination trip.'

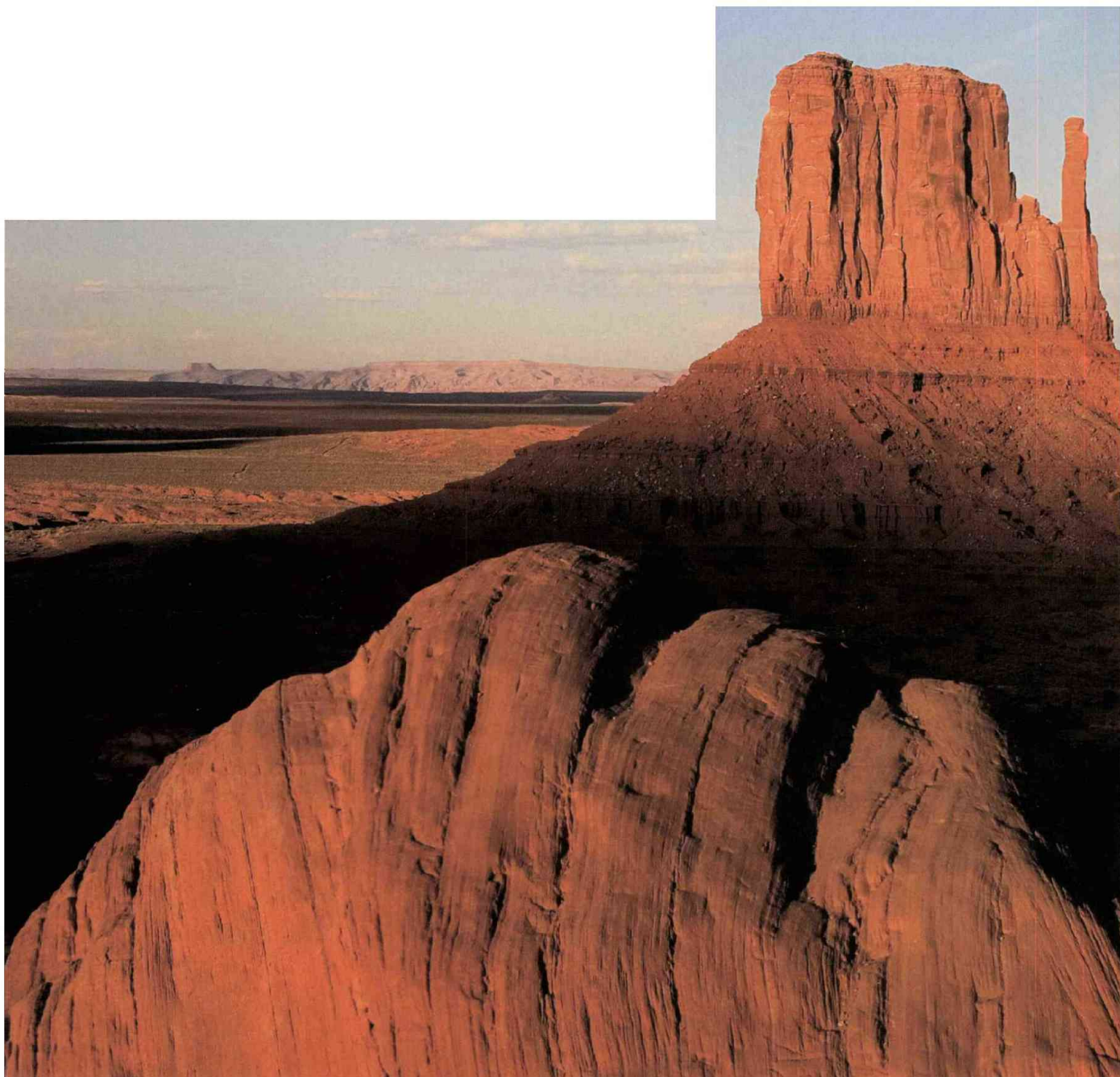
- The city: 'New Orleans's whole gumbo of French, Spanish and African voodoo influences make it irresistible, especially during Mardi Gras. Try Frenchman Street for gloriously ramshackle bars, such as Napoleon House and Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop.'

- The ski resort: 'Colorado every time. But rather than Aspen and Vail, check out Telluride. It's a beautiful 19th-century Wild West town cradled in the Rockies, with tremendous skiing and a more intimate feel.'

## WHICH DESTINATION WOULD YOU NEVER GO BACK TO?

Tunisia and the Canary Islands fight a losing battle here. The Canaries are 'tacky', 'touristy' and 'spoiled by chavvy shops', while Tunisia is 'spoiled by the aggressive hassling'. And there are several dishonourable mentions for Lille, your least favourite city stop. It was thrust to prominence by its Eurostar link, but your advice is to stay on the train. Apparently, on Sundays in Lille 'everything shuts'. And on the other six days of the week 'there's nothing to do'. >







The USA: you love it for  
the vastness of open spaces  
such as Monument Valley